

## ORIGINAL RESEARCH

### Competency of Community Health Volunteers on Complementary Feeding Strategies of Children 6-23 Months in Masinga, Machakos County, Kenya

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#### Abstract

**Background** Sub-optimal complementary feeding practices are a major cause of malnutrition among children aged 6-23 months in developing world. Community Health Volunteers (CHVs) can help in reducing malnutrition through advocacy of the recommended complementary feeding (CF) practices. However, CHVs' face myriad challenges including, low levels of education and inadequate training. There is scarcity of information on the level of training and competence of CHVs in the area of CF. This study therefore aimed at assessing the competency (knowledge, skills and practices) of CHVs on CF in Masinga Sub-County of Machakos County.

**Method:** The study adopted a cross-sectional analytical design. A total of 168 CHVs were randomly selected. A researcher administered questionnaire was used to collect data on knowledge and training of CHVs. Observation checklist was used to assess counselling skills of CHVs on CF. Both descriptive and Inferential statistics were used to analyse data.

**Results:** Findings showed that 23.2%, 66.1%, and 10.7% of participants had high, moderate and low CF knowledge score respectively. Majority (83.9%) of CHVs had fair skills. Significant associations were observed between CHVs' CF knowledge level and their occupation (AOR = 1.63 C.I; 1.23-8.25), education (AOR = 3.36 C.I; 1.07-10.59) and source of income (AOR = 3.50 CI; 0.91-13.40). Overall, only 8.3% of the CHVs were competent based on knowledge on CF and their counseling skills to caregivers of children aged 6-23 months.

**Conclusion:** This study rates knowledge of CHVs as moderate and concludes that it is sub-optimal to promote appropriate CF. Counselling skills' score indicated that CHVs possessed fair skills therefore lack practical skills to execute their duties. Overall, only 8.3% of the CHVs met the minimum expected competence threshold based on a combined knowledge, skills and practice score. MOH and other stakeholders should enhance training of CHVs.

**Key words:** Community Health Volunteers, Complementary Feeding, Competency, Knowledge, and Skills,